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Rewarding Team Members

Janet Fox, Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist

Providing recognition to paid and volunteer staff increases motivation and retention. This NebGuide explains how managers can tailor recognition to individuals, thus increasing its effectiveness.

The Importance of Rewards

If there's one thing in life that everyone wants it's to be appreciated, rewarded and recognized for their contributions. Studies indicate that employees find personal recognition more motivational than money. Results of a recent Council on Communication Management survey confirms this. According to a recent Gallup poll of people who stopped volunteering, 42 percent said they felt their work was unimportant or was unappreciated at the work place or in a volunteer setting, appropriately rewarding people is important to retention and job performance.

Recognition Is...

Webster's New World Dictionary defines recognition four ways: 1) To be aware of; 2) acknowledgment and approval; 3) gratitude and 4) to notice as in passing. This definition validates all the areas one might need to cover when rewarding or recognizing team members. The most important part of this definition, and the piece that doesn't get much acknowledgment, is "to notice as in passing." Critical to providing rewards and recognition is that they must be user-oriented to be effective. So noticing a team members' contributions and acknowledging their performances are key pieces in providing effective rewards.

Types of Recognition

Formal recognition is what comes to mind first when people think of rewarding team members or volunteers. Formal recognition usually takes place during special occasions or after successful assignments. Many organizations hold an annual awards ceremony where individuals are singled out for their achievements. Recognition can include:

- presenting plaques, awards and certificates during a ceremony;

- identifying team members using a name badge or business cards;
- mounting a photograph exhibit featuring team members in action;
- providing a directory including pictures and descriptions of their contributions;
- holding special events, and
- establishing a bulletin board recognizing team member accomplishments.

The most effective recognition systems occur in the day-to-day exchange between a team member and their leader through sincere appreciation for work being done. This type of recognition is more effective in part because it much more frequent. This **informal recognition** consists of spontaneous rewards that can be implemented with minimal planning and effort. Informal rewards also tend to be less expensive than formal awards. Informal recognition can include:

- a sincere word of thanks from the right person at the right time;
- involving the individual in decisions that affect them;
- asking about and showing an interest in the individual's family;
- sending thank you notes;
- remembering the member during special occasions such as birthday, and
- selecting the member to represent the team at a training.

Personal Preferences

How do we know what kind of recognition a team member or volunteer might prefer? David McClelland and John Atkinson suggested that people have three separate motivational needs, with one being predominate. Understanding which motivational needs "fit" volunteers or staff becomes vital information as one strives to provide appropriate rewards.

To determine your motivation, place a check by the statement that best describes you. There can be only one answer per number.

Motivation Test

Instructions: To determine your motivation, place a check by the statement that best describes you. There can be only one answer per number.

1. ☐ a. When doing a job, I seek feedback.
☐ b. I prefer to work alone and am eager to be my own boss.
☐ c. I seem to be uncomfortable when forced to work alone.
2. ☐ a. I go out of my way to make friends with new people.
☐ b. I enjoy a good argument.
☐ c. After starting a task, I am not comfortable until it is completed.
3. ☐ a. Status symbols are important to me.
☐ b. I am always getting involved in group projects.
☐ c. I work better when there is some challenge involved.
4. ☐ a. I work best when there is some challenge involved.
☐ b. I would rather give orders than take them.
☐ c. I am sensitive to others - especially when they are mad.
5. ☐ a. I am eager to be my own boss.
☐ b. I accept responsibility eagerly.
☐ c. I try to get personally involved with my superiors.
6. ☐ a. I am uncomfortable when forced to work alone.
☐ b. I prefer being my own boss, even when others feel a joint effort is required.
☐ c. When given responsibility, I set measurable standards of high performance.
7. ☐ a. I am very concerned about my reputation or position.
☐ b. I have a desire to out-perform others.
☐ c. I am concerned with being liked and accepted.
8. ☐ a. I enjoy and seek warm, friendly relationships.
☐ b. I attempt complete involvement in a project.
☐ c. I want my ideas to predominate.
9. ☐ a. I desire unique accomplishments.
☐ b. It concerns me when I am being separated from others.
☐ c. I have a need and desire to influence others.
10. ☐ a. I think about consoling and helping other people.
☐ b. I am verbally fluent.
☐ c. I am restless and innovative.

11. ☐ a. I set goals and think about how to attain them.
☐ b. I think about ways to change people.
☐ c. I think a lot about my feelings and the feelings of others.

Score Key

- | | | |
|-----|----|-------------|
| 1. | a. | Achievement |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Affiliation |
| 2. | a. | Affiliation |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Achievement |
| 3. | a. | Influence |
| | b. | Affiliation |
| | c. | Achievement |
| 4. | a. | Achievement |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Affiliation |
| 5. | a. | Influence |
| | b. | Achievement |
| | c. | Affiliation |
| 6. | a. | Affiliation |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Achievement |
| 7. | a. | Influence |
| | b. | Achievement |
| | c. | Affiliation |
| 8. | a. | Affiliation |
| | b. | Achievement |
| | c. | Influence |
| 9. | a. | Achievement |
| | b. | Affiliation |
| | c. | Influence |
| 10. | a. | Affiliation |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Achievement |
| 11. | a. | Achievement |
| | b. | Influence |
| | c. | Affiliation |

Tally your answers

Achievement
 Influence
 Affiliation

Source: Red TAXI Trainers' Guide: Training Volunteer Managers to Get Going, HandoutR25

Selecting the Best Recognition

McClelland (1995) reported that by knowing the needs of each motivation type — affiliation, achievement and influence — a reward system can be developed to keep staff motivated.

Affiliation Motivated Person...

- Is concerned with being liked and perceived as a good person
- Needs warm, friendly relationships
- Needs personal interactions
- Likes group project involvement
- Works easily with others
- Seeks socialization opportunities

Achievement Motivated Person...

- Needs specific goals to work toward
- Strives for personal best
- Needs specific parameters set to measure success
- Works well alone
- Seeks responsibility
- Strives for unique accomplishments
- Likes to solve problems
- Wants concrete feedback
- Needs tangible rewards

Influence Oriented Person...

- Needs to impact and influence others
- Focuses on reputation
- Concerned with position
- Can work alone or with a group
- Keeps an eye on the overall goals
- Is persuasive
- Responds to titles denoting authority
- Seeks positions of authority and responsibility

Reward Guidelines

When designing a recognition system, think about the following items:

1. **Match the reward to the person.** Start with the individual's personal preferences; reward him/her in ways that will be individually rewarding.
2. **Match the reward to the achievement.** Effective reinforcement should take into account the significance of the achievement. The reward should be a function of the amount of time you have to plan and execute the achievement.

3. **Be timely.** To be effective, rewards need to be given as soon as possible after the desired behavior or achievement. Rewards that come weeks or months after the achievement do little to motivate employees to repeat their actions.

4. **Be specific.** Always say why the reward is being given - provide a context for the achievement.

Once you have consistently rewarded the desired behavior, your pattern of recognition may become more intermittent as the desired behavior becomes habitual with employees. For every four informal rewards (thank you note, etc.), there should be a more formal acknowledgment (a special gift). For every four formal acknowledgments, there should be still more formal rewards (plaques or formal praise at an official meeting) leading ultimately to such rewards as raises, promotions and special assignments. Keep in mind that not everyone desires to be rewarded with plaques and certificates. The key to recognizing individuals effectively is to match the reward to the person and their specific achievement and delivering this recognition on a timely basis.

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Reviewers

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